

EDITOR'S COLUMN

An Eclectic Research Agenda for Asia

As this issue marks the beginning of the next term for the Journal's Editorial Board, we wish to acknowledge the significant contributions of our members and express our profound gratitude for their invaluable input in guiding the development of the Journal.

We especially extend our sincere thanks to members who have just finished the previous term on the Editorial Board. They are Dr. Gerhold K. Becker, Dr. Paulin Batairwa Kubuya, Dr. Duc Loc Nguyen, Dr. Angela Ann Zukowski, and Dr. Preciosa de Joya. Their dedication and contributions have been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of the Journal. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with them and welcoming new members to the Editorial Board as we strive to maintain the Journal's commitment to excellence and innovation in scholarly publishing.

Thus, in addition to the existing board members, we have the honor, in this issue, to extend a warm welcome to new members. Firstly, Dr. Keval J. Kumar, an Adjunct Professor at Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad, India. Formerly, he held the positions of Reader and Chair at Pune University's Department of Communication and Journalism, Professor and Director at Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC), and Senior Lecturer in English at Parle College, Mumbai. He has also taught at Ohio State University, Siegen University, Jacobs University Bremen, and Bahrain Technical Institute. Dr. Kumar's research interests encompass communication theory, media education, cultural studies, political communication, and religious communication.

Secondly, Dr. Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology at Saint John's University School of Theology and Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota, USA. Her published works include: "Evangelization and Catechesis" (2017), "Connected Toward

Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age” (2014), and “Daily Prayer” (2013).

The third new member of the Editorial Board is Dr. Phramaha Chakrapol Acharashubho Thepa, an instructor specializing in Buddhist Philosophy at the Faculty of Religion and Philosophy, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand. He is an expert in contemporary Buddhist philosophy, Indianology, Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Buddhology, and meditation, with numerous published articles on these topics.

The fourth new member is Dr. Chaiwat Meesanthan, currently the Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, Thammasat University, Thailand, and Assistant Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at L’Arts-TU: The Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University.

Fifth is Dr. Roderick Evans M. Bartolome, a faculty member at Far Eastern University, Philippines, where he teaches Communication core subjects, Integrated Marketing Communications, Development Communication, and Thesis Writing classes for the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Master of Arts in Communication programs.

The sixth addition to the Editorial Board is Dr. Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, currently teaching Post Graduate Studies at the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. His research interests include Anthropology of Islamic Culture; Sociology of Religion; Islamic Studies; Islamic Politics in Indonesia and Malaysia; Sufism and Mysticism; Islam in Southeast Asia; Islamic Movement in Southeast Asia; Malay World; and Societies and Cultures of Aceh (Indonesia).

Finally, we welcome Dr. Michael Quang Nguyen, SVD, currently serving as Dean of Studies at Good Shepherd Seminary in Mt. Hagen, Papua New Guinea. Additionally, he teaches Scriptures, Theology, and Anthropology at the Seminary. As a missiologist, he is particularly interested in contextual theology from the Vietnamese perspective.

The diverse expertise, religious affiliations, and cultural backgrounds of these esteemed scholars promise to enrich the breadth and depth of perspectives within our journal. With their varied areas of specialization spanning communication theory, pastoral theology, Buddhist philosophy, Southeast Asian studies, Islamic culture, and contextual theology, among others, our editorial board represents a vibrant mosaic of academic disciplines and cultural insights. In conjunction with our existing esteemed members, this new cohort on the editorial board will form a dynamic team representing a spectrum of expertise, religious beliefs, and cultural perspectives.

Together, they will synergize their knowledge and experiences to steer the journal towards greater academic excellence and inclusivity. Their diverse backgrounds, spanning various disciplines and global regions, will infuse our editorial deliberations with fresh insights and robust scholarly discourse. We anticipate that their collective wisdom will facilitate stimulating dialogues, innovative research, and nuanced understandings, thereby furthering the journal's commitment to promoting interdisciplinary and interreligious discourse and advancing scholarship, especially in the Asian milieu.

This issue rounds out the second installment of volume 22 of the Journal with another set of research articles that reflect an extremely eclectic research agenda, addressing subjects ranging from traditional religious beliefs to digital communication and the role of AI in modern education.

To begin with, Daniella Zsupan-Jerome delves into the intersection of spirituality and communication within the evolving digital landscape in her article "Spirituality of Communication as Foundation for a Missional Approach to Digital Culture." She advocates for a Christian spirituality of communication, emphasizing authentic relationality and proposing a framework for engaging with digital culture in a missional manner.

Moving on to Saw Than Htut Lynn's exploration titled "Embracing Peace Education for Interreligious Awareness in Myanmar: A Case Study of the Judson Research Center," the focus shifts to peace education in Myanmar, where religious conflict persists. Lynn empha-

sizes the importance of interreligious awareness in peacebuilding, drawing from qualitative case studies conducted at the Judson Research Center.

Turning to “Examining Cases Involving Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Philippines” by Kurt Zeus L. Dizon, attention is directed towards the legal challenges faced by Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW) in the Philippines. Dizon analyzes key cases involving JW members, shedding light on the delicate balance between religious freedom and state authority in Philippine jurisprudence.

Next, Benya Lertsuwan and colleagues investigate the transition to web-based education during the pandemic in “A Case Study of Web-Based Communication for Online Teaching and Learning at a Christian University in Buddhist Thailand.” Their study identifies obstacles to effective online learning and teaching, offering insights to navigate digital education post-pandemic.

Shifting focus to “AI in the Academe: Opportunities and Challenges for Religious Education” by Ocampo and Gozum, the authors explore the impact of AI on religious education. They analyze the potential of AI integration in academia while addressing associated challenges and opportunities.

In “Christian Witness and Proclamation through Migration” by vãnThanh Nguyễn, SVD, the spotlight falls on migration’s impact on evangelism. Nguyễn examines how Christian immigrants serve as potential missionaries, enriching host countries’ theology and spirituality while reshaping global perceptions of Christianity.

Moving on to “Sorcery and Witchcraft: A Critical Challenge in Papua New Guinea” by Tuan Viet Cao, the discussion shifts to the persistent issues of sorcery and witchcraft in PNG. Cao highlights the grave consequences of these beliefs and advocates for government and organizational efforts grounded in Christian values to combat these challenges.

Finally, in Brandon Cadingpal’s “*Kasiyana* as Religious Communication among the Kankanaeys in the Philippines,” the focus

returns to indigenous belief systems. Cadingpal explores how *Kasiyana* reflects the Kankanaeys' belief in the divine and serves as a form of religious communication, aligning with Christian teachings.

This set of research articles presents a diverse array of topics, reflecting the multifaceted nature of academic discourse today, especially in the Asian context where the traditional and the modern co-exist in conspicuous ways across its rich landscape. From examining the impact of AI in education to exploring religious beliefs and practices in various cultural contexts, these articles encompass a wide range of subjects that are relevant and timely in today's academic landscape. The inclusion of articles on AI in education and digital communication reflects the increasing integration of technology into various aspects of society, including academia. With the rapid advancements in AI technology, understanding its implications on education and social systems is crucial for educators, policymakers, and researchers alike.

On the other hand, the articles discussing religious beliefs and practices offer insights into the cultural diversity and complexity of religious phenomena. From examining sorcery and witchcraft in Papua New Guinea to exploring religious communication among the Kankanaeys in the Philippines, these articles shed light on how religious traditions intersect with contemporary issues and shape individuals' lives and societies. Other articles in this issue highlight the need for ongoing dialogue among religions and between religion with other secular institutions in order to promote social and religious harmony in Asia. We hope that the research presented in this issue underscores the need to continue delving into pressing subject matters of great relevance to Asian society, contributing to advancing knowledge and understanding in their respective fields.

Anthony Le Duc, SVD

Chief Editor